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Newspaper Used In Smear Effort By CIA Agents

I now have the pieces to complete the jigsaw puzzle of the CIA's attempt to smear a distinguished Greek journalist whose investigative reporting embarrassed the Nixon administration.

When a military junta seized power in 1967, Elias Demetracopoulos fled Greece—only to run afoul of the CIA in his American refuge. Here are the Byzantine details of Demetracopoulos' long ordeal:

During the 1968 presidential race, Demetracopoulos was told that the Greek junta's CIA-subsidized intelligence service, the KYP, was sending money to the Nixon-Agnew campaign through Thomas Pappas, a Greek-American businessman with CIA ties.

In 1971, Demetracopoulos told his story to a House subcommittee that was investigating U.S. policies toward the Athens junta. That's when his troubles began.

The story was essentially confirmed years later by the U.S. ambassador to Greece, Henry Tasca. But at the time the Nixon administration hotly denied it. Attorney

General John N. Mitchell threatened to have Demetracopoulos deported. An anonymous State Department memo, given to then-House speaker Carl Albert (D-Okla.), accused Demetracopoulos of having printed classified documents that hurt Greek-American relations.

The State Department later retracted the memo and issued an apology. But a Justice Department memo quotes a State Department official asking Justice to do "everything possible to see if we can make . . . any . . . kind . . . of case . . . against the subject."

In 1977, Sen. Daniel K. Inouye (D-Hawaii), then chairman of the Select Committee on Intelligence, looked into Demetracopoulos' charge that the CIA was continuing to harass him. There is evidence that the CIA, fearful that Inouye's investigation would turn up a money scandal, arranged to blacken Demetracopoulos' reputation by leaking false information to David Binder, a New York Times reporter.

In a lengthy profile, Binder cited CIA records to the effect that Demetracopoulos had been associated with Yugoslav and Israeli intelligence and had been turned down as a recruit by the CIA and Army intelligence in the 1950s—charges that Demetracopoulos vehemently denied.

To this day, the CIA refuses to admit that any of its people leaked

information to Binder. But an unusual error in his article casts serious doubts on the agency's denial. Throughout the article, Binder misspelled the subject's name as Ilias Dimitracopoulos—exactly the way the CIA spelled it in files acquired by Demetracopoulos under the Freedom of Information Act.

In 1980, the Greek ambassador in Washington confirmed to the House Intelligence Committee that Demetracopoulos had in fact worked with the Greek underground, and had citations to prove it.

Then last fall the CIA belatedly admitted that the information in the Binder story was false. In a letter to Rep. Wyche Fowler Jr. (D-Ga.), chairman of an intelligence subcommittee, the CIA said there was no evidence to suggest that Demetracopoulos had ever worked for any foreign intelligence agency.

The final vindication for Demetracopoulos came when The New York Times published a story clearing him of the charges in its 1977 profile. As the ultimate accolade, the Times spelled his name right this time.

Footnote: In its correction of the Binder story, The New York Times blamed the mistake on the CIA: "Despite what CIA officials told the Times in 1977, there is nothing in the agency's files to support the allegations."